cultural imperial structure now achieved. The Han not only welded China into a political Empire. They founded its solidarity upon a more lasting basis, that of one civilization and theory of life. It was this basis of union which China was never completely to lose and which was to hold her together in spirit even in the long periods when administratively she was divided.

Independent speculation tended to die out. Tung Chung-shu, for example, would have had Wu Ti proscribe all non-Confucian teaching and study, and, with the exception of Taoism, in the course of the Han dynasty the other schools disappeared as separate entities. One of the thinkers who stood out prominently in the memory of later generations was Wang Ch'ung, of the first century A.D. An eclectic and a sceptic, influenced by both Taoism and Confucianism and yet not blindly enamored of either, he reacted against much of the current Confucianism. He held that man is not so important as Han Conf ucianists declared him to be, that natural phenomena and catastrophes are not the results of man's acts, and that such events as a human birth are accidental and not the purposive deeds of the universe. He criticized Confucius and Mencius, expressed doubts about the reliability of much of the ancient literature, argued against immortality and the existence of any spirit, and made much of the *yin* and the *yang.* He was, moreover, a determinist, contending that man's lot is fixed by blind fate. Even Wang Ch'ung, however, was not so original as were many of the Chou dynasty, and most of his cardinal ideas had been held before him. Yang Hsiung, a contemporary and minister of Wang Mang and one of the noted thinkers of the Han, held that the nature of man, one of the

moot points of Chinese philosophy, is a mixture of good and bad, and that each becomes what instruction and practice make him. He, too, however, was clearly not striking out on particularly new lines and was a devoted Confucianist.

Some reasons for the decline of originality seem fairly clear. One was the stern repressive measures of Shih Huang Ti. An* other was probably the encouragement given under the Han by the state, now a unified empire, to Confucianism and Taoism. Even though in the first century or more of the dynasty the Legalists had state support, as time passed official preferment and social distinction were more and more gained through ad-